

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 3691

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PGOV CA

SUBJECT: PC OPPOSITION LEADER JOE CLARK'S VIES ON CANADIAN
ROLE IN NATO

REF: A. OTTAWA 2470, B. OTTAWA 1336

1. SUMMARY - PC OPPOSITION LEADER JOE CLARK HAS
RECEIVED GOOD AND RUNNING PRESS PLAY DURING HIS
17-DAY TOUR OF EUROPE (SEPT 5 TO 22). CLARK'S
COMMENTS ON THE CANADIAN ROLE IN NATO HAS RECEIVED
PARTICULAR ATTENTION. WHILE THESE MIGHT BE DIS-
COUNTED SOMEWHAT AS CAMPAIGN RHETORIC, IT IS SAFE
TO SAY THAT CLARK AND THE PCS FAVOR A STRONGER
CANADIAN ROLE IN NATO AND IN THE DEFENSE OF WEST
EUROPE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE CANADIAN PRESS HAS GIVEN FAIRLY
PROMINENT PLAY TO PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE (PC)
LEADER JOE CLARK'S CURRENT TOUR THROUGH WESTERN
EUROPE. THIS COVERAGE WHICH HAS BEEN FAVORABLE
IS, NO DOUBT, GOOD NEWS TO PC STRATEGISTS SINCE
THE TRIP WAS INTENDED, IN LARGE PART, TO BUILD
CLARK'S IMAGE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS. ONE COMMENTA-
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TOR, WHO PRESUMABLY RESEARCHED THE ITEM, CLAIMED

THAT CLARK, BETWEEN HIS ELECTION TO THE PARLIAMENT IN 1972 AND HIS BECOMING LEADER, NEVER ONCE GAVE A COMMONS SPEECH EVEN TOUCHING ON FOREIGN POLICY. BE THAT AS IT MAY, HIS JUNE VISIT TO WASHINGTON WAS ENTIRELY SUCCESSFUL IN THE OPINION OF PC STRATEGISTS (REF A) AND THIS EUROPEAN SWING APPEARS TO HAVE DEVELOPED ON THE SAME BASIS.

3. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, CLARK SPOKE OUT FOR A STRONGER GOC COMMITMENT TO THE DEFENSE OF WESTERN EUROPE. BOTH THE CP TICKER AND A TORONTO STAR STAFF WRITER DESCRIBED CLARK'S VIEWS ON CANADA'S ROLE IN NATO, EXPRESSED IN A SEPT 6 SPEECH AT THE CANADIAN BASE AT LAHR, WEST GERMANY. BOTH STORIES INDICATED THAT CLARK WAS CRITICAL OF PRESENT GOC POLICY TOWARDS NATO. REPORTEDLY, HE ACCUSED THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT OF DECREASING CANADA'S ROLE IN NATO AND SUGGESTED THAT RECENT DECISIONS TO BUY THE LRPA AND LEOPARD TANKS WERE DIVERTED PRIMARILY BY COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATIONS, PERHAPS TO COMPLETE THE CONTRACTUAL LINK WITH THE EC. CLARK ASSERTED THAT A PC GOVERNMENT WOULD BEEF UP ITS EUROPEAN MILITARY ROLE AND WOULD INCREASE DEFENSE SPENDING. HE WAS QUOTED AS SAYING, "OUR PREMISE IS THAT CANADA IS NOT NEUTRAL IN THE CONFLICT OF IDEOLOGIES EVIDENT IN WESTERN EUROPE" AND THAT, IN ADDITION TO THE TRADITIONAL GOC ROLE IN PEACEKEEPING, "ANOTHER FUNDAMENTAL PILLAR IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO TRADITIONAL FRIENDS AND ALLIES IN WESTERN EUROPE."

4. COMMENT: EVEN THOUGH THE NEXT FEDERAL ELECTIONS ARE NOT LIKELY BEFORE 1978, JOE CLARK IS ALREADY RUNNING FOR OFFICE AND THIS TRIP IS A PART OF THAT CAMPAIGN. WHILE ONE SHOULD BE CAREFUL WITH CAMPAIGN PROMISES, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT CLARK AND THE PCS ARE SINCERE IN CALLING FOR A GREATER CANADIAN ROLE IN NATO. AT THE POLICY SESSIONS IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE FEBRUARY PC CONFIDENTIAL

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LEADERSHIP CONVENTION, CLARK SUPPORTED THIS VIEW IN EVEN STRONGER LANGUAGE THAN HE USED IN EUROPE. AND, OF COURSE, THIS IS AN AREA IN WHICH HE CAN CARVE OUT A PC POSITION WHICH CONTRASTS NOTICEABLY WITH THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT RECORD OF LACKLUSTER SUPPORT FOR A STRONG CANADIAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN WESTERN EUROPE (REF B).
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